

VZCZCXRO2098  
PP RUEHBW RUEHIK RUEHPOD RUEHYG  
DE RUEHNT #0594/01 1441410  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 231410Z MAY 08  
FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9700  
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 3982  
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 0195  
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4597  
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0479  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1151  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 4206  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0479  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0401  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0518  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2485  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC 0062  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHINGTON DC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RHMFISS/USCENTCOM POLITICAL ADVISOR MACDILL AFB FL

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TASHKENT 000594

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [KCRM](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINS](#) [SNAR](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: SCENESETTER FOR A/S BOUCHER'S MAY-JUNE  
08 VISIT

REF: A. TASHKENT 552  
[1](#)B. TASHKENT 531

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Your trip to Tashkent offers a chance to cement recent improvements in U.S.-Uzbek cooperation, particularly on counter-narcotics and border security, and to offer the Uzbeks candid advice on the necessity of translating recent positive messages on human rights into actual improvements in observance. You should also consider leveraging Uzbekistan's "6 plus 3" Afghanistan proposal, as a way to engage the Uzbeks and other Central Asians more fully in the process of Afghan stabilization. You will meet during your visit with Foreign Minister Norov, National Security Council Secretary Ataev and President Karimov. As noted in classified reporting, ref B, Karimov is a president in control. However, he is also in his third and quite possibly final presidential term. The political undercurrents of succession preparations are quiet but clear; now is a time when the messages we send and the relationships we cultivate matter. End summary.

Civility restored in bilateral relations  
-----

[1](#)2. (SBU) U.S.-Uzbek relations have regained in the past year a level of civility. Harassment of Embassy personnel has largely ceased; our officers and local staff are able to travel and to meet on a regular basis with contacts. Our NGO partners have told us that they have been given the green light by Uzbek authorities to meet with us and resume normal relations. Some problems, such as obstacles to educational exchanges, continue, but civility is in vogue. Across the Uzbek government, contacts with the Embassy have picked up. Ambassador Norland has met privately with President Karimov three times (once with Central Command's Admiral Fallon) and has had several other encounters. Karimov has in every instance underscored his renewed interest in positive relations.

Cooperation on narcotics, border security, and Afghanistan  
-----

[1](#)3. (SBU) What does this mean for U.S. policy priorities? For starters, the Uzbeks are clearly interested in

counter-narcotics, military-to-military cooperation and border security. They have invited the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration to resume operations and to reopen its offices here. They have actively courted the U.S. Defense Department and in January hosted then-Commander of U.S. Central Command, Admiral William Fallon. The Uzbeks have made a number of minor gestures, such as allowing U.S. military and civilian personnel assigned to NATO and/or International Security Assistance Force staff to transit the Uzbek-German Termez airbase aboard German aircraft on a case-by-case basis. They have also expressed interest in U.S. TRANSCOM's plans for a Northern Ground Line of Communication for Afghanistan logistics. Commander TRANSCOM General Norton Schwartz will visit in late June.

14. (SBU) The Uzbeks have expressed keen interest in - and concern about - Afghan stability. They have made no secret that they think Karzai has outlived his usefulness and that our own efforts are less than perfect. That said, they are interested in helping. They recently hosted a very thoughtful conference on Afghan security, drawing experts from the region and beyond. They are finalizing a deal with the Afghans on construction of new electrical transmission and delivery infrastructure to provide increased amounts of power South. Finally, their "6 plus 3" proposal for an Afghan contact group has President Karimov's strong support. It is not our preferred vehicle for Afghan policy. For starters, "6 plus 3" leaves the Afghan government out of the discussions. However, it does offer us an opportunity to draw the Uzbeks and other Central Asians more actively into a

TASHKENT 00000594 002.2 OF 002

constructive dialogue on Afghan stability. National Security Council Secretary Ataev is particularly well versed on Afghan issues and may be open to new insights. The Uzbeks will be at Paris, though we do not yet know at what level.

Moving from atmospherics to action  
-----

15. (SBU) Despite some actual increases in cooperation - noted above - most of the renewed atmospherics involve talk. On the security side, we are still waiting for an Uzbek response to our December 2007 diplomatic note on modalities and information-sharing for border security and law enforcement cooperation. Though we are comfortable moving ahead on some small programs, we remain concerned that our local employees never again experience the difficulties seen last summer. That said, atmospherics are important, and we are more hopeful now than we have been for several years.

Human rights: recognizing change, pushing for observance  
-----

16. (SBU) Human rights is the real thorn in our relations. The Embassy has reported extensively on the numerous steps the Uzbeks have taken in recent months, but we have tried to be realistic and balanced. Lost in the Washington wrangling seem at times to be two important points: First, on legislative reform, the Uzbeks have rapidly returned to and even surpassed the status-quo-ante of early 2005. They have passed major legislation on trafficking-in-persons, have joined two International Labor Organization conventions focused on child labor, have increased in law the independence of the judiciary vis-a-vis the executive, and have abolished the death penalty. Secondly, they have over the past two years actually made progress in some thorny areas. For example, efforts to overcome social taboos regarding trafficking-in-persons have made amazing progress. Whereas five years ago, many officials denied that an Uzbek woman would ever succumb to prostitution ("only Russians do that"), police around the country are now sensitized. Likewise, though repressive measures against extremist Islam continue, they seem to have abated somewhat. The Uzbek government appears to have recognized a need to allow moderate Islam to flower; the Soviet generation has given

way, perhaps, and the result is a predictable drop in the appeal of radical alternatives. While the human rights battle is far from won, such underlying social trends offer hope that may seem more relevant here than from Washington.

17. (SBU) Finally, staying on human rights, we would note the role our improved bilateral relations play. The International Committee of the Red Cross agreed with the Uzbeks to resume prison visits on a six-month trial basis, offering real hope that the problems of torture and prison abuse might be meaningfully addressed. The Red Cross attributes the Uzbek agreement to our persistent and direct engagement. Encouraged by the new Uzbek attitude, the Red Cross, along with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, is also promoting the idea of training Uzbek forces to help them avoid a repeat of the tragic events in Andijon in 2005.

#### Planning for the future

-----

18. (SBU) As noted ref B, President Karimov is in his third, and quite possibly final, term. He appears to be in full control, but the elite and he seem to recognize that time and age make no exceptions. President Karimov is interested in his legacy, and the elites are interested in the future. The relationships we establish now, and the messages we send about our long-term interests in Uzbekistan, will resonate.

NORLAND